

The flight of the oryx: Doha, an emerging, well-connected knowledge hub

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Qatar's capital city, Doha, is set to emerge as a major knowledge hub, with its educated, high-tech workforce and its international connectivity. However, the lack of a cohesive plan for development and the mobility of that workforce in and out of Qatar could stymie its success on the global stage.

The rulers of the Arab state of Qatar have shaped their capital city, Doha, into one of the fastest-growing cities in the world and also, through economic diversification and other measures, establishing it as a significant hub city in the [global knowledge economy](#). Research published in the *International Journal of Knowledge-Based Development* suggests that the ascendancy of Doha, the notion of the Oryx taking off, is emerging because of the relational economic geography and the physical urban development in the city.

Sven Conventz of TU Munich and colleagues there and at Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences, Germany and the University of Strathclyde, UK, explain how the Oryx antelope, logo of Qatar Airways, provides a neat metaphor for the rise of Doha in the Gulf region. Whereas Dubai and Abu Dhabi have become rather famous in the global theatre, Qatar's capital attracted little international attention until recently despite rapid urban. Its fossil fuels, progressive governance - since 1995 - and its advantageous geopolitical location could change that to Doha's and Qatar's benefit.

The team has investigated the notion of "when the Oryx takes off" and

found that [knowledge](#) intensive Qatari firms in the Gulf region play an important role. However, the airline connectivity between Qatar, Europe and South-East Asia is equally important. Conversely, there is, they report, a distinct lack of urban amenities for knowledge workers and if this problem is not addressed, the Oryx may never fly as high as the state's rulers hope.

"Today knowledge is considered a key driver for innovation, economic growth and spatial development," the team asserts. However, we still lack a fully accepted definition of what the knowledge economy exactly is. Nevertheless, it certainly encompasses advanced producer services (APSs), high-tech industries and knowledge-creating institutions, such as universities and research establishments. "Large-scale public investments initiated by Qatar's rulers have shaped contemporary Doha into one of the fastest growing cities in the world and a serious contender as an emerging regional hub city," the team says. This is happening despite the lack of a cohesive development vision or plan, their findings suggest, and the ever-changing composition of Qatar's society might ultimately ground the Oryx unless there is long-term commitment from the highly educated workforce to stay and to develop a functioning, self-contained service economy.

More information: Conventz, S., Thierstein, A., Wiedmann, F. and Salama, A.M. (2015) 'When the Oryx takes off: Doha a new rising knowledge hub in the gulf region?', Int. J. Knowledge-Based Development, Vol. 6, No. 1, pp.65-82.

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